

## Section 2. The Human Environment of Nantucket

### “Human Environment” vs. Quality of Life

Each of us individually, and collectively as a society—or more simply as a community, find ourselves impacted by three environments; the natural environment, the economic/-business environment, and the human environment. Ultimately, the long-term future of Nantucket depends upon the maintenance of an appropriate balance between the forces acting in these three environments. The delicate balance of these three disparate forces is crucial to the long-term sustainability of our community and to our long-term quality of life.

Daily, Islanders wrestle with the question, “How many Islander is too many? How much business development can the Island support? Do we need to, or can we control the development of our natural resources--especially our water supply? What about over-population? Pollution? How can we maintain our present “way of life” without despoiling the Island for future generations? Can Nantucket be sustained over the long term?

All these questions are intimately intertwined with our “human environment.”

Our “human environment” can be thought of as consisting of twelve elements that directly effect all Nantucket residents. These elements are:

- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Housing
- Income Security
- Leisure/Culture
- Participation in Government
- Public Assistance
- Public Safety
- Sustainability
- Transportation
- Volunteerism

Our quality of life is simply the impact of our human environment on us individually, on our family, our friends, our neighbors, and all fellow human beings. The sum total of these twelve social elements dictates our quality of life. The quality of life is at once, an individual, a family, a neighborhood, a community, and a societal phenomenon.

We each experience our quality of life in our own way. Each of us faces a unique set of social realities representing a unique quality of life—a situation that can, and often does, differ greatly from person to person, household to household, and from neighborhood to neighborhood.

How do we come to understand our quality of life? How do we measure it? What are the indicators that tell us whether we are experiencing an improving or declining quality of life?

The people of Nantucket, acting through the Town's Council for Human Services undertook this research—an effort to measure our quality of life in 2006. We citizens acting together as a public/private partnership, have carried out this study of ourselves. We look at our human environment, and consider the impact of the various aspects of our human environment on all of our people—all of the permanent, year-round residents of Nantucket.

This **Report of Findings – 2006** provides the highlights of what we have recently found—the results of our study of our human environment. This Report concerns itself with the realities of the quality of life of all residents of Nantucket.

Who are we? We are not tourists or visitors to Nantucket. We are not seasonal homeowners living much of the year in some distant country, state, city, or suburb. We are not business people traveling to the Island. We are the people who call Nantucket our home. Some of us were born here, most of us moved here, but we are those who now live here, work here, raise our families here, and grow old together here. We are the permanent, year-round citizens of this unique island.

Collectively, we “year-rounders” form the infrastructure that makes Nantucket work year-round. Together, we face a human environment that is quite unique. The Island is different in a number of respects from even neighboring regions of Massachusetts and certainly differs considerably from most of the rest of the United States. Our pleasant and unique natural environment coupled with a largely tourism-based economic/business environment and a fragile island, creates a rather unique human environment—an environment in which we all live and by which we all are impacted. These realities taken together create the collective quality of life that we all share.